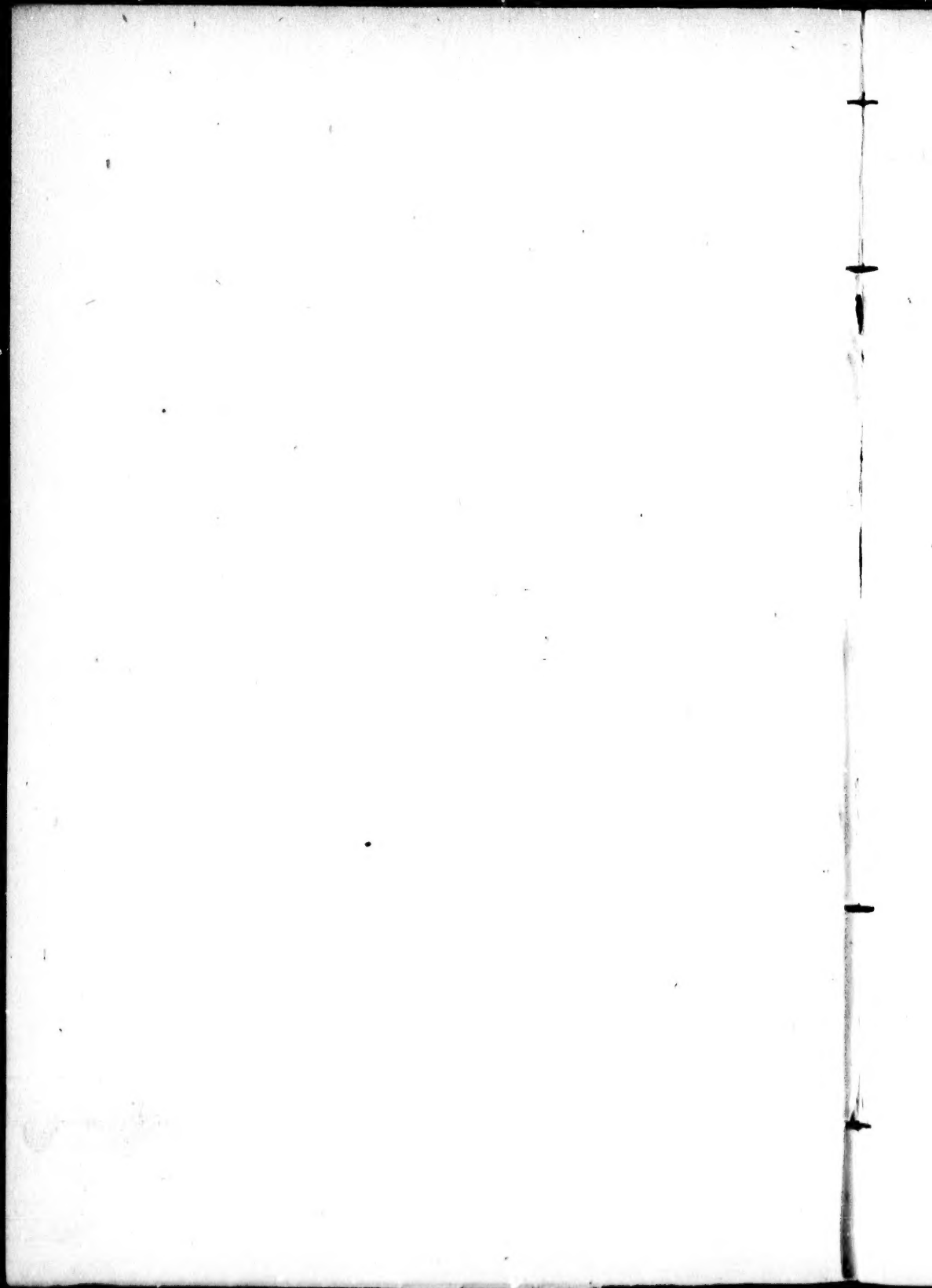


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THE STIPEND.

by Col. Gussy.



DEDICATION.

TO JAMES GORDON BENNET, Esq.,

PROPRIETOR OF THE NEW YORK HERALD :

SIR,—Moved by your great spirit, your benevolence and your capacity, I take the liberty to dedicate to you a little pamphlet. As an example of the oppressive burdens under which you labor, Pomeroy's Democrat assures the world that the purchasers of silk pay forty per cent. over the value. Here we complain of a deficit, and in both countries it would seem that the taxes are to be augmented. In the few sheets submitted herewith for your consideration I have attempted to bring under the notice of the public what I believe to be the cause of this evil.

With your talents and powerful organ you can, if any one can, redress this grievance, abate this nuisance. But, whether you agree with or differ from me, you are earnestly requested to enlighten mankind by publishing statistical accounts of that branch of the public expenditure which is devoted, both by the Federal Government and by each individual State, to the compensation of patriotic, I must not say mercenary, Legislators.

The expense inseparable from the existence of Royal and Imperial personages and their courts is usually cited as a motive for giving the preference to Republican institutions, but I predict that stipendiary legislators will be found much more costly. In this last case, too, the remedy must be more difficult and much more tardy, because of the multitudes who are interested in perpetuating the evil.

I am now of no political importance, but you who established a connection between New York and Ujiji may possibly be disposed to enquire in Montreal, where I am well known, whether I am entirely unworthy of your countenance.

A. GUGY.

Quebec, 14th April, 1874.

THE STIPEND.

In England, Members of Parliament are actuated by patriotism ; in Canada, by avarice.

There the standard of excellence is honor, here it is self.

In England, Members of Parliament serve gratuitously ; here they vote themselves salaries, which they call by the pet name of *allowance*.

This is a misnomer. A fellow may, perhaps, be permitted to say, I allow myself in the morning a cocktail and a brandy smash ; after which, I allow myself, at intervals, as many gin slings as I can carry home. Here the word allow, though not strictly accurate, may possibly be tolerated, because in this case the moral sense, yields to the animal propensities. But to allow is the consent given by one person, or body, to the proposed act of another. It is to grant, to give permission to another. Now, the members who exact this salary or compensation, for occupying a comfortable seat in the Parliament halls, having no more than their own consent, can only be said to take—to grab the money. The true name for the act and the thing would therefore be the significant phrase invented and constantly used by our astute neighbors :—

“ Stealings.”

Assured that every candid man, woman and child, not an accessory to the crime, who understands English, will assent to all the foregoing propositions, I proceed at once to facts.

The Federal Parliament has chosen to take, grab, steal, or to allow to each member, of both branches, for every session, one

thousand dollars! That is a fact, the consequences of which, developed by arithmetic, are as follows :—

The number of the members of the Commons is	
204 × 1000 =	\$204,000
Of the Senate, is 75 × 1000 ..	75,000

Grabbing and stealings by this body for one session	\$279,000
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But the Local Legislature, more modest, only grabs, steals, or allows itself \$600 apiece. Its account, therefore, would stand thus :—

65 Members of the Legislative Assembly at \$600 =	\$39,000
24 Members of the Legislative Council	14,400

Making for one session	\$53,400
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I am not sufficiently acquainted with the condition, either of Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, or British Columbia, to be enabled to speak of those parts of the Dominion with certainty. But if the members of those bodies be no meaner than those whereof I have hereinabove spoken, they may, and probably do, tax the people to an equal amount, say

	\$332,400
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Forming a yearly total of	\$664,800
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But our Legislators also allow themselves travelling expenses, with the precise amount of which I am not acquainted.

And our Governor General, so called because he does not govern, annually receives fifty thousand dollars and various perquisites.

Exclusive of these two last items, however, our Legislators absorb every four years, \$2,659,200.

Such is the fact—and those who grab or extract these two millions six hundred and fifty-nine thousand two hundred dollars from the public Treasury, are the very men who are entrusted with the custody and care of the public funds. No other human being has ever been consulted; no plebiscite to ascertain the opinion of the

people has been resorted to. The process is more simple—our Legislators vote themselves what they see fit—then they take it!

It is a compendious process, a short cut to wealth. It is so far better than highway robbery, that those who crib or grab the cash need never expose their precious health to the night air to wait for the tardy traveller; nor do they run the risk of being perforated by a pistol ball, or of being convicted by an ignorant jury. Then it is said of the travelling expenses, which they also allow themselves, that some have charged for distances from places which they had not left to places at which they did not arrive. There are many, too, who have grabbed the \$1000 as members of one house besides the \$600 as members of the other house! Those who hold office modestly accept of their salaries into the bargain.

And such is the insanity of the people that no step is taken to correct this evil. And every four years opportunity is offered—for the people, or any section of the people, could abate the nuisance, did they but see fit to refuse to elect any man who did not pledge himself to serve gratuitously, as in England. Every candidate who warmly squeezes the hands of electors, is supposed to offer some pledge, to jabber some grandiloquent phrases, specifying the ground upon which he ought to be preferred to his rival. But the simple fact, the true reason, might be stated in a word. A candidate for the Commons must be understood to say please give me a ticket for soup to the tune of \$1000 per session. So a candidate for the Local House, more moderate, only claims permission to rob the public Treasury of \$600 per session. I know, of course, that candidates, in fact, never expressly allude to the subject; but it is the meaning of every one of them. And here it may be suggested, that the temptation to bribe is thus frightfully increased. Supposing that candidates do bribe in England, the candidate there offers money to buy consideration. Here, bribery has all the characteristics of an investment; and a candidate for the Commons can well afford to advance \$1000 to obtain four thousand, or more, besides travelling expenses.

Thus, then, though when they meet they are said to assemble to transact the people's business, they avowedly propose to attend to their own. And, since they affect to do, at one and the same time,

both their own business and that of the people, the enquiry naturally arises about which of the two are they most in earnest, to which do they attach most importance, the interest of the country or their own.

As this state of things exists after every general election for four years, I shall, by way of example, suppose an exodus of the grocers, like Gilpin on "pleasure bent," for four years.

Determined, however, to provide at once for their own advantage and for supplying the community with the indispensable articles of commerce in which they deal, the grocers resort to a mass meeting to take that interesting subject into consideration. Mr. LeMesurier in the chair.

My readers can imagine, fully as well as I, what, on such an occasion, oratorical grocers would expose ; but, to make a long story short, I shall submit the resolution which, in imitation of the course tolerated by the great body of the electors, the assembled grocers must be understood to take :

Moved by Mr. George Hall, seconded by Mr. Hossack, and carried unanimously :—

That to promote our own interest, as well as that of the community, we do hereby empower our clerks to deal with our funds during our absence, for the ensuing four years, as they may see fit, with the right of fixing the amount of salary to which they may deem themselves entitled, and of paying themselves by taking the money out of the "Till."

Moved by Mr. Thompson, seconded by Mr. Fraser, and carried unanimously :—

That, being perfectly certain that we can never have cause to complain of the foregoing judicious arrangement, we expressly renounce the right to call any of our said clerks to account for misconduct, and restrict ourselves to that of supplying them with funds, without, however, relinquishing the right of substituting another for any one of them at the end of four years.

The measure thus ascribed to the grocers is precisely the course pursued by the whole electoral body, the only difference being that the latter are merely passive, while the grocers are supposed to have

NOTE.—All the above named are eminent grocers in the City of Quebec.

acted preliminarily. The effect, however, must be the same in both cases. One consequence which has necessarily followed is the great increase of candidates and their ferocious animosity to each other ; another the absolute impunity with which any act of speculation or other villainy can always be committed. Such acts may be used as stalking horses to further the expulsion of rivals ; but, as in the case of the Pacific Scandal, upon the effecting of that object the successful competitors will cheerfully condone and forget every delinquency, however enormous. To pursue the criminal to punishment would be to establish a dangerous precedent.

This allowance has, however, another, and a most objectionable effect ; it unduly increases the influence and power of the Ministry. Thus, as by a constitutional rule, no money can be granted by Parliament save on the recommendation of the Crown, the Ministry for the time being have the power to allow or to withhold any additional "allowance" that members may be desirous of grabbing. Thus, the indemnity, or stipend, has been from time to time increased, and as that advantage could only be secured by the connivance or consent of the Ministry, the latter could impose their own terms. To fill their pockets, then, the members would vote for any measure proposed by the Ministry, for any plan or conspiracy, for instance, like the "Pacific Scandal," tending to make the fortunes of the Ministers at the expense of the State.

But the clear profit which can be made by the above-mentioned investment excites to frenzy the desire of a seat in Parliament, and as it becomes necessary to stimulate voters supporters are rewarded at the *public expense* by the gift of place. Hence, competence is never thought of, and sneaking, mixed with perfidy, is the only road to office. This accounts for that (all but) universal inefficiency and for those thefts and defalcations which prevail in official circles, which are the bane and the reproach of our system. In our community, at least, the wealth acquired by successful politicians is a proof of the value of their investment ; nor are they, like traders, subject to reverses or to the infinite fluctuations which affect commercial men.

Then, as men of fortune will not generally submit to the degradation of competing for seats in Parliament upon the humiliating terms to which indigent candidates descend, the course at present

pursued is productive of pauper legislators—a class proverbially selfish. But in our country competence, seldom inherited, must be acquired by some sort of labor, and men generally reach middle life before they can be said to be in easy circumstances. Those pauper legislators, then, are, unavoidably, young men—with no more experience than principle—precisely the class of recruits that ministerial drill-sergeants can train to unreasoning obedience.

The only excuse for this acknowledged evil is the pretended general poverty, and the supposed incapacity of desirable men to bear the expense incident to the annual attendance in Parliament. This is a miserable pretext. There is abundance of wealth in the country, and multitudes of experienced men of mature age are ready and willing to serve gratuitously. I am, myself, one, and I know hundreds of others. Admitting that the majority, in a particular county or town, might be desirous of electing some highly gifted individual, who was both devoid of ambition, and too poor to defray his own expenses, a case which must seldom occur, they might furnish him with means by taxing themselves. But it does not follow that the whole population should, therefore, be taxed, still less that our law-makers should all be paupers, depending for their bread on those for whom it is their province to legislate.

It must be clear, too, that men of mature age, possessed of pecuniary means, would not be so easily induced to lend themselves to jobs as indigent lads—and from their stake in the country the former would be necessarily more disposed to promote the public good—in which that of their families would be involved, nor could they patronize rings nor countenance frauds. Young men, on the contrary, having their fortunes to make, would be actuated by much greater avidity. That is self-evident; nor being tempted by excessive cupidity would they be restrained as elder persons might, by the fear of detection.

The course hereinabove recommended would hold out the hope of a career for men who had acquired a reasonable degree of wealth. As the legislator would thus cease to be a mere speculator for the acquisition of money at the public expense, a mere vampire,—so in the decline of life, one who had been engaged in the active pursuit of gain might find better, happier and more honorable occupation than that persistence in the further accumu-

lation of wealth, and that indulgence in eating, drinking and smoking, which are now the sole solace or occupation of the aged. I dare point to the honorable and useful careers which, under the improved system that I recommend, would have been open to such capitalists as Vanderbilt.

It is this allowance, too, which fires the ambition and unsettles the mind of the working classes. The shoemaker no longer sticks to his last, the carpenter to his bench—all are moved by the desire to legislate, and to partake of the loaves and fishes. But, if the working-men, to whom such frequent appeals are made, and who are so ready to enter the arena, would only reflect upon the figure that a lawyer or a doctor would make in a workshop, they might be disposed to admit that, to legislate judiciously, some previous information and some training are necessary. When elected, working men, profoundly ignorant of the subjects which are to be dealt with, are invariably the passive instruments of heartless designing politicians. This is not always visible at a distance, but ignorance dabbling with constitutional questions, is sufficient to overturn the social edifice. When that will have been accomplished, and blacksmiths, tailors, carpenters, shoemakers, occupy the first positions will peace and happiness be secured? Will they themselves profit by the change?

That is the danger; and the allowance, the stipend, grabbed by elected legislators, demoralizes and corrupts the working classes. It is the rock upon which the vessel of State will split, nor can it (unless it be done at once) be abolished without a bloody struggle.

Finally, let us look at the bare fact. The salary of the Governor General, added to the salaries which Legislators award to themselves, cost the country about three millions of dollars for every Parliament.

How many widows and orphans would not such a sum relieve, how much suffering would it not alleviate, how many public improvements would it not promote, from how much taxation would it not exempt the laboring poor?

Even now there is a deficit, taxation must be augmented; and if no change takes place, bankruptcy, revolution, bloodshed, wide spread ruin, sooner or later, are inevitable.

In the meantime, judging from what has transpired of the trickery

and treachery, of the swindlings and scandals, perpetrated by legislators, with prodigious pretensions, and titles to match, the country must prepare for falsehoods and frauds, for rings and rascalities not always susceptible of detection and punishment.

But the Judges, who are expected to "execute justice and to maintain truth," who are entrusted with the highest mission that Almighty God has assigned to man, must at one time have been stipendiaries and grabbers, or have been selected and appointed by those who, being Ministers, must have sought and have obtained positions as stipendiaries and grabbers. But adverting to the unfit—unworthy, vicious individuals who have here, it is universally admitted, sat on the Judicial Bench—it behoves me to remind the country that the worst of them are sure of impunity since they can only be impeached by one set of grabbers and tried by another. Then Riel, tempted by the allowance, has obtained a seat, and sneaking up the back stairs in disguise, he has claimed his travelling expenses, as, on some future occasion he will no doubt claim, and probably obtain, his allowance. The stipend is manifestly the cause of this discreditable incident.

The efficacy of the law depends upon the Attorney-General. He may be implicated in a Pacific Scandal; he may be desirous of screening an associate, or a tool involved in a charge of murder; he may affect to try; he may feign a desire to convict, yet he may suppress a damning proof of guilt. This may account for results erroneously ascribed to the waywardness of Jurors, and, if the destinies of the country are, in the future, to be entrusted to mercenary Representatives, the Judges and Law Officers should cease to be chosen out of that body.

A. GUGY.